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BOOK REVIEWS

BOOKS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT AND JEWISH THEOLOGY:

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ACCORDING TO THE MASORETIC TEXT. A New Translation. The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1917. Pp. xv, 1136. \$5.00.

THE STORY OF BIBLE TRANSLATIONS. MAX L. MARGOLIS. The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1917. Pp. 135.

THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. É. NAVILLE, D.C.L., LL.D., D.LITT., F.S.A. Oxford University Press. 1916. Pp. vi, 82. \$1.20.

JEWISH THEOLOGY. K. KOHLER. The Macmillan Co. 1918. Pp. xiii, 505. \$2.50.

As long ago as 1892 the Jewish Publication Society of America took the initial steps towards an English translation of the Bible, assigning the several books to individual scholars in America and Great Britain, with the expectation of bringing these independent translations into unity through the labors of an editorial committee and by correspondence with the authors. Considerable progress was made in the work on this plan; but as time passed it became evident that the scheme was impracticable, and accordingly in 1908 a board of editors selected by the Jewish Publication Society and the Central Conference of American Rabbis was formed, by whom the work should be done in coöperation. Of this Editorial Board, Dr. Cyrus Adler was the chairman, and Professor Max L. Margolis editor-in-chief and secretary of the Board.

The results of their labors, extending over a period of nine years, are embodied in the volume before us; and the first obligation of the reviewer is to congratulate the editors upon the successful accomplishment of their task.

The translation properly follows the Masoretic text and the order of the books in the three parts of the Hebrew Bible. In only a few instances the Ketib is preferred to the prescribed marginal reading (Kere). The translators have availed themselves of the labors of their predecessors, both before and after the so-called Authorized Version of 1611. They have wisely adhered as closely as possible to the inimitable diction of that version, even when they differ from

its interpretation. In this respect they have been more conservative than the American revisers of 1885 and the editors of the so-called "Standard American Edition" of 1901. They have, of course, followed the unbroken tradition of the versions from the Septuagint on in substituting "the Lord" for the Tetragrammaton which the American revisers print "Jehovah." They have also recognized that in a version intended for popular use the multiplication of marginal notes, offering the unlearned reader his choice of variant readings in the text or versions and various renderings of Hebrew words between which the learned decline to decide, is out of place.

The names of the editors — Schechter, Kohler, Philipson, Schulman, Adler, Jacobs, Margolis — are assurance that the work has been done by as competent scholars as there are in America, and an examination of the translation which they have produced fully confirms the favorable expectation which the constitution of the Editorial Board creates. It may be affirmed without fear of contradiction that they have given English-reading peoples the best version of the Old Testament in existence, one distinctly superior to the revision of 1885 in either its British or American form. In the places — comparatively few in number, it must be said — in which the English versions have been dictated by traditional Christian interpretation, the reader will find the largest divergence from the renderings with which he is familiar; not because the editors have set up a Jewish interpretation against the Christian, but in general because they have more faithfully adhered to the meaning of the Hebrew text. A conspicuous example of this may be seen in Daniel 9 24-26, where the new translation alone renders the words of the original as anybody who knew Hebrew and had no apologetic end to serve would translate them off-hand. The Authorized Version here frankly — one might say, naïvely — embodies the Christian exegesis. The English revisers, at the most important point, followed the Hebrew in the text, but in the margin gave the reader the benefit of the translation they rejected; while the American revisers went back to the Authorized Version in their text.

It remains to say that the volume is excellently printed, in paragraphs, with an unobtrusive numeration of the verses. Not only in the poetical books but in the plainly measured oracles of the Prophets, the text is broken in lines in a way which makes its character apparent to the eye as well as to the ear.

It is to be hoped that this excellent version will find wide currency, not only among the Jewish readers for whom it is primarily intended, but among Christians also.

The second volume mentioned above may be regarded as a companion to the new translation of the Bible issued by the Jewish Publication Society. It gives in compact and popular form an account of the Targums, the Septuagint and later Greek versions made by Jews, the Syriac and Latin Bibles, the Jewish translations in the Middle Ages, the translations of the Reformation Age and succeeding centuries, and modern translations by Jews and Christians, with concluding chapters on agencies for circulating the Bible and their work, and on the difficulties of translating the Bible.

No scholar is better fitted for such a task than Professor Margolis, who stands in the front rank of students of the ancient versions, particularly of the Greek translators. The book is a pleasure to the eye, and is illustrated with a number of facsimiles of manuscripts and printed texts, which, notwithstanding their reduced scale, are admirably clear. There is also a complete index. All in all, there is more trustworthy information about the versions of the Bible to be got from this work than from many larger and more pretentious volumes.

Professor Naville is a respected Egyptologist, who, without knowing the Semitic languages or anything about Semitic epigraphy more than can be learned from a desultory perusal of encyclopædias, has propounded a novel theory of the linguistic and palæographic history of the books of the Old Testament. If a Hebrew scholar, with an equivalent ignorance of the Egyptian language and Egyptian epigraphy and palæography, should propound a revolutionary history of the text of the *Book of the Dead*—for example, that it was brought by Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees in the “cuneiform” language and writing—Professor Naville would probably be among the first to remind him, “ne sutor ultra crepidam.”

It would be a waste of time to reproduce here the theory which Naville confidently sets forth in these lectures, or to expose the blunders in the very elements into which he falls; but to Semitic scholars it may be recommended as an extremely entertaining book. It is to be regretted that a man of Naville’s eminence in his own field should discredit himself by such a misadventure; and it is surprising that it should be put out among the scientific publications of the new British Academy.

President Kohler, of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, was one of the editors of the Jewish Encyclopædia, and contributed to it the greater part of the theological articles. He also wrote an outline of Systematic Jewish Theology in the series, *Grundriss der*

Gesamtwissenschaft des Judentums (1910). The present volume is not a translation of the last-named work, but a treatment of the same subject in English on a somewhat different plan and scale. In the task which he set himself in these two volumes the author had no predecessors. Excellent studies exist in different parts of the field, chiefly from a historical point of view; but no attempt had hitherto been made, either on the conservative or progressive side, to cover the whole field systematically.

Dr. Kohler has long been recognized as one of the leaders of the progressive school in American Judaism, and it is from this point of view that he has written the volume before us. Conservative, or, as they would prefer to be called, orthodox, Jewish scholars, will probably regard the book in the same light in which a Catholic theologian looks on a treatise on systematic theology by a somewhat advanced Protestant. A presentation of Jewish theology from a liberal standpoint is as legitimate, however, as a corresponding presentation of Christianity. The reader must in either case keep the standpoint in mind.

The three main divisions of the subject are "God" (God as he makes himself known to Man; the Idea of God in Judaism; God in Relation to the World), "Man," and "Israel and the Kingdom of God." The historical development of Jewish doctrines receives full measure of attention; the author accepts the main results of modern criticism and makes free use of the investigations of Christian scholars. Christian readers, who it is to be feared are in the habit of thinking that the history of Jewish thought ended in the Talmud — if they do not make it end in New Testament times — will find the treatment of the mediæval and modern developments especially profitable.

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THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF THE GREEKS FROM HOMER TO THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY. CLIFFORD HERSCHEL MOORE. Harvard University Press. 1916. Pp. 385.

This book is based upon lectures delivered in part before the Lowell Institute in Boston and in part at five colleges in the Middle West. In its ten chapters it covers a period of over a thousand years, and, as its title implies, it deals, not primarily with the material side of religious origins, cults, and mythology, but with the higher ranges of Greek thought, philosophical, ethical, and theological, and thus stands in a class with such books as Campbell's *Religion in Greek*